

Montrose at the Crossroads



**Urban Land
Institute**

Houston

MONTROSE AT THE CROSSROADS

A Report From The
Technical Assistance Panel
Urban Land Institute
Houston District Council

April 30, 2009
Houston, Texas

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About ULI-the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to:

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing and electronic media; and

- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 35,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public official, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a one and one half day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an introduction/briefing/tour of their site and meeting with sponsor representatives. A half day of interviews with key stakeholders, a half day of research/work session and a presentation of findings to conclude the panel. A written report is prepared and published. The sponsors provide briefing materials to the panelists prior to the session.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

Houston District Council

The Houston District Council of the Urban Land Institute is organized to carry forward the mission of the national organization with a greater understanding of the unique regional issues and relationships fostered by its over 1000 members in the South Texas Region roughly defined by the Greater Metropolitan areas around Houston, San Antonio and Austin.

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The Organizing Sponsors:

Blueprint Houston – a 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to the creation of a general plan for the City of Houston.

Nearatown Association – A City of Houston Super-Neighborhood (24) representing civic associations, local businesses and institutions.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

When the Neartown Association held a Development Forum to identify and address critical issues in the Neartown/Montrose Area, one of the most discussed concerns of the participants that day was the future of the intersection at the heart of Montrose at Westheimer Avenue and Montrose Boulevard. The ideas generated that day were many and varied, but it was clear that there was great concern about this keystone corner of this vital Inner Loop neighborhood.

Blueprint Houston representatives that attended the Development Forum felt that this intersection and its surrounding neighborhoods embody many of the conflicts and tensions that are part of the development and redevelopment that is happening in throughout Houston and felt that this area would benefit from the application of the Citizens Vision, Values and Goals that came out of the first two Citizens Congresses. The top seven elements of the Citizens Vision, Values and Goals are a sustainable economy, a diverse community, healthy environment, balanced transportation and land use, healthy diverse neighborhoods, and an efficient accountable government.

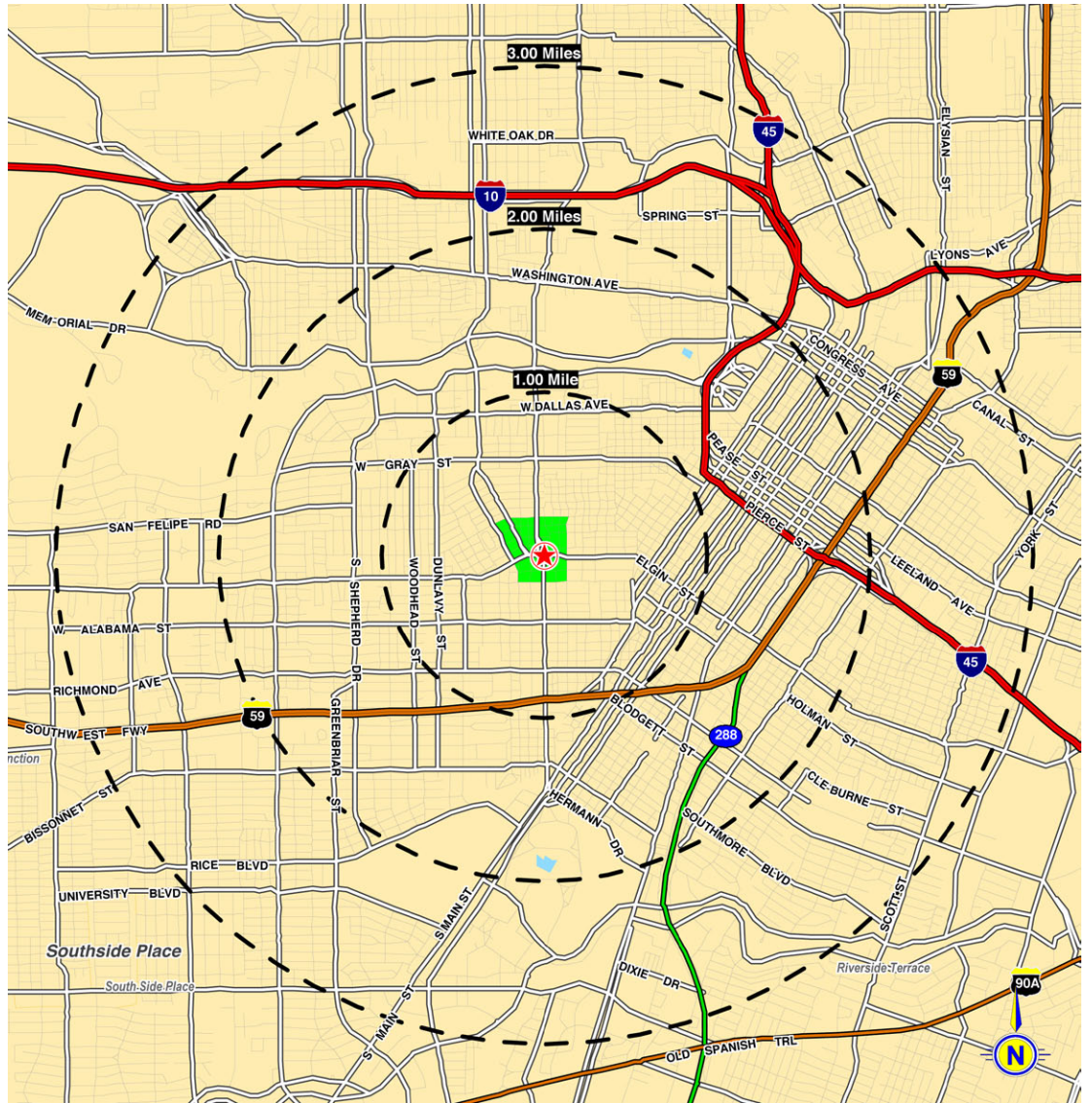
The ULI TAP process appeared to be ideally suited to applying these elements in balancing the planning needs of the community and the individual needs of the residents, property owners, business owners, and visitors. With this clear concern for the uncertainty of the neighborhood's future, the ULI Technical Assistance Panel was commissioned by Blueprint Houston (www.blueprinthouston.org) and the Neartown Association (www.Neartown.org) as a means to identify appropriate types of real estate development and redevelopment for this important crossroads in the middle of the Montrose district.

The Study Area, illustrated on the following pages, is a target area that extends several blocks in each direction from the intersection of Montrose Boulevard and Westheimer Road.

Three key questions the sponsor put forth to be addressed are:

- What are the most appropriate forms of development and redevelopment for the Neartown Crossroads Study Area?
- How can we integrate a mix of appropriate uses, public amenities and the artistic culture of Montrose to create a distinct place in Neartown?
- What will it take to make it happen? And who will take the lead to make the plan a reality?





City of Houston Map - Downtown/Neartown

Introduction

The Montrose area lies just outside the southwestern edge of downtown Houston. The culture of Montrose is a rich stew of urban grit, artistic potency and pride in its diversity. Its 24/7 magnetism goes beyond its mansions and bungalows from the 1920s, its apartments from the 1960s and its hodgepodge of popular restaurants, nightclubs and shops. Like few other communities in Houston, Montrose has a distinct identity. It's an identity worth preserving from the potential threats of choking traffic, a reputation for an unsafe street scene, major parking problems, unplanned density and the demolition of the older structures that give it character.

The threats are real and steps must be taken now to enhance Montrose and elevate the neighborhood to its rightful stature. Montrose is at the crossroads.

At the heart of the Montrose scene is the crossroads of two major thoroughfares, Westheimer running from east to West and Montrose stretching from Allen Parkway on Buffalo Bayou to the fountain at Hermann Park on the south. The Crossroads of those two major thoroughfares forms what one study called “The Belt Buckle of Montrose.” It is the Belt Buckle and the immediate neighborhood that is the focus of this report by the participants of the Technical Advisory Panel.



Montrose Area Demographics and Market Potential

The market potential of the study area is substantial, diverse and growing. The economic downturn in the late 1980s and early 1990s eroded the area's population base and buying power temporarily. However, the housing boom that took place between 1998 and 2006 in Houston significantly altered the central city's complexion, especially parts of the Montrose area, where new townhome and condo construction first emerged and thrived.

The desire for urban lifestyle-oriented living and reduced or reversed commutes has greatly benefited the Montrose area and adjacent areas such as The Houston Heights, Downtown, Midtown and Upper Kirby. From empty nesters relocating from the suburbs to young, urban professionals recently graduated from college to students of the many area colleges/universities to young families relocated from other cities and countries, the area's demographic diversity has exploded, demanding more varied and better quality retail goods, services and restaurants as well as better public infrastructure and housing.

Some demographic facts about the area's population, based on a three-mile radius from the Westheimer/Montrose Boulevard intersection, highlight these trends:

- Population has grown 16% since 2000 and is forecast to grow an additional 8% over the next 5 years to reach roughly 175,000;
- The largest age group is 30 to 44 years with a median age of about 35.
- More than two thirds of the population is not married, though the high gay/lesbian population of the area skews this statistic to a certain extent, since many live as domestic partners but are counted as unmarried.
- The median income is just under \$70,000, however, that does not tell the whole story. The income distribution is bifurcated:
- 28% of households have annual incomes above \$100,000
- 27% of households have annual incomes below \$25,000
- This is due to the presence of lower-income

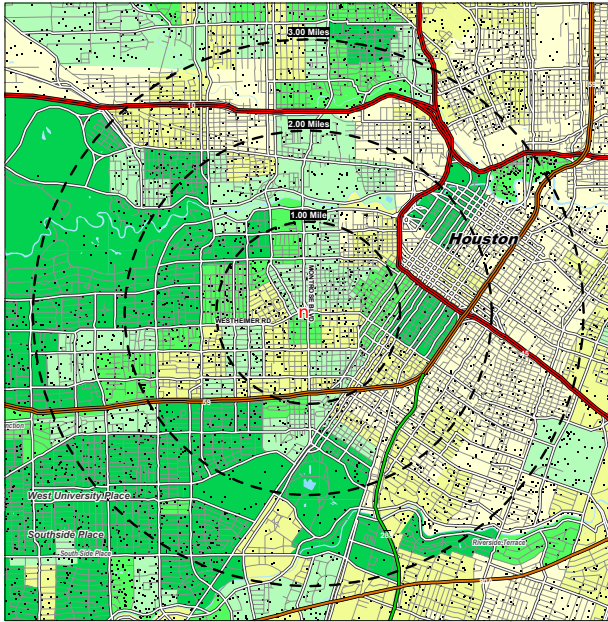
service sector workers who also call Montrose home.

- The ethnicity of the area shows 60% of the population is white; 23% black;
- Statistics related to race in the target area show one third (34%) are of Hispanic descent, up from 23% just eight years ago – a growing trend in line with Houston patterns generally;
- 44% have graduated from college while 21% did not graduate high school and many are still students;
- Roughly two thirds of all residents rent their housing;
- Residents typically work in white collar occupations;
- Total household expenditures in 2008 were estimated at \$4.3 billion.

While resident population and home values are growing, the large numbers of people who are employed in the area, estimated at more than 350,000 in 21,000 businesses, contribute strongly to solid market potential for additional high-quality retail, restaurants, housing and public infrastructure.

Tourists, college students and business travelers from across Houston and around the globe are attracted to the area's unique ambiance, boutiques and chef-owned destination restaurants, comprising a third important target market, in addition to residents and employees.





Current Year Estimated Median Household Income

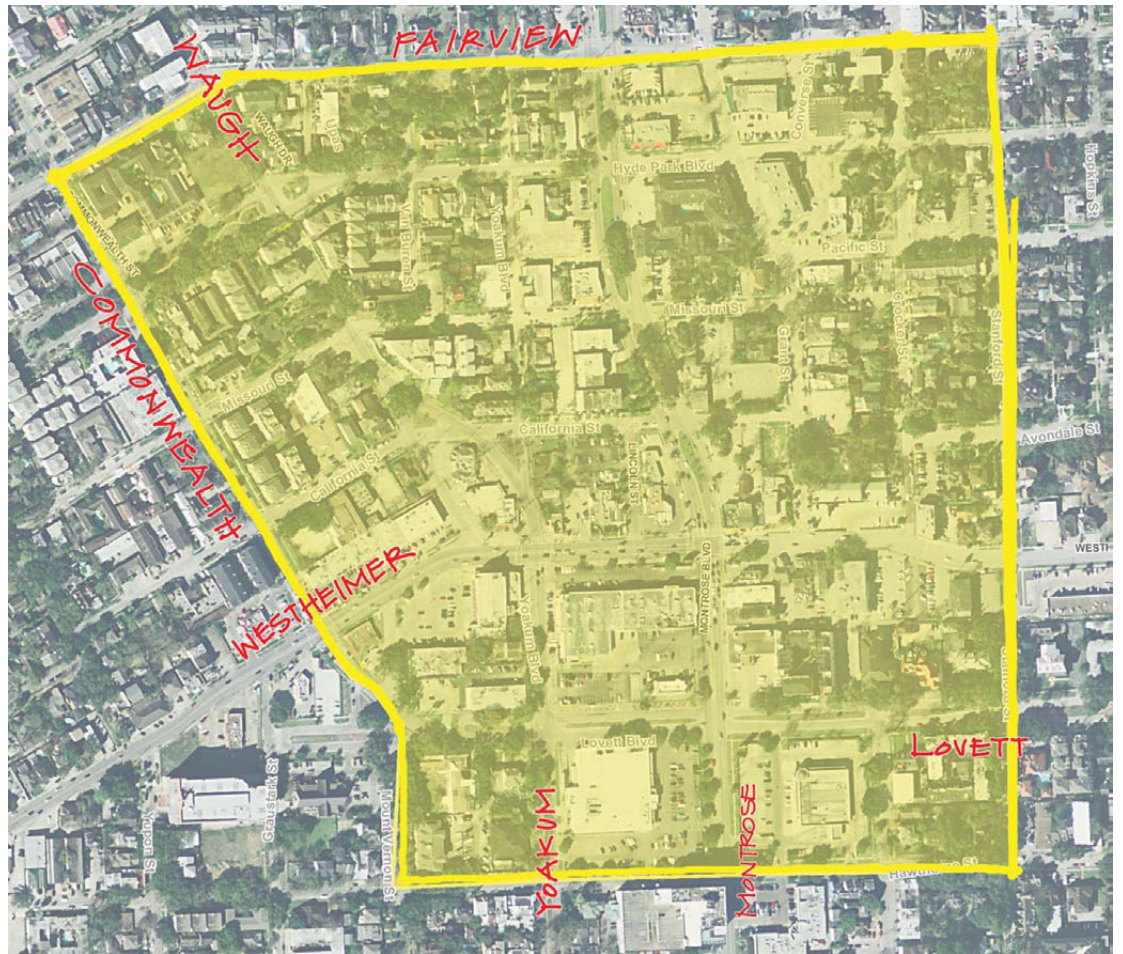
Population Density
 One Dot = 50 Persons
Median HH Income
 By Block Groups

- Dark Green: \$75,000 or more
- Medium Green: \$60,000 to \$75,000
- Light Green: \$45,000 to \$60,000
- Yellow-Green: \$30,000 to \$45,000
- Yellow: Less than \$30,000

Montrose & Westheimer Houston, Texas		1.00 mi radius	2.00 mi radius	3.00 mi radius
POPULATION	2008 Estimated Population	26,959	76,135	159,833
	2013 Projected Population	28,743	81,839	173,096
	2000 Census Population	24,322	67,378	138,188
	1990 Census Population	22,790	62,367	128,872
	Historical Annual Growth 1990 to 2008	1.0%	1.2%	1.3%
Projected Annual Growth 2008 to 2013	1.3%	1.5%	1.7%	
HOUSEHOLDS	2008 Est. Households	14,222	36,373	66,849
	2013 Proj. Households	14,662	37,952	70,346
	2000 Census Households	13,758	34,218	61,224
	1990 Census Households	12,318	30,075	54,520
	Historical Annual Growth 1990 to 2008	0.9%	1.2%	1.3%
Projected Annual Growth 2008 to 2013	0.6%	0.9%	1.0%	
AGE	2008 Est. Population 0 to 9 Years	9.8%	10.6%	11.8%
	2008 Est. Population 10 to 19 Years	8.5%	9.5%	11.0%
	2008 Est. Population 20 to 29 Years	21.4%	18.8%	17.5%
	2008 Est. Population 30 to 44 Years	27.9%	25.5%	24.4%
	2008 Est. Population 45 to 59 Years	21.7%	21.8%	20.9%
MARITAL STATUS & SEX	2008 Est. Population 60 to 74 Years	7.8%	9.6%	9.8%
	2008 Est. Population 75 Years Plus	2.9%	4.3%	4.8%
	2008 Est. Median Age	33.9	35.4	34.9
	2008 Est. Male Population	57.4%	55.4%	54.8%
	2008 Est. Female Population	42.6%	44.6%	45.2%
INCOME	2008 Est. Never Married	50.4%	43.7%	37.5%
	2008 Est. New Married	25.4%	29.1%	31.0%
	2008 Est. Separated or Divorced	20.6%	22.4%	25.5%
	2008 Est. Widowed	2.6%	4.8%	6.0%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$200,000 or More	7.3%	10.2%	10.9%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$150,000 to 199,999	5.6%	5.3%	5.1%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$100,000 to 149,999	11.3%	11.9%	11.6%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$75,000 to 99,999	10.3%	9.8%	9.3%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$50,000 to 74,999	16.7%	15.3%	14.0%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$35,000 to 49,999	16.9%	14.4%	13.0%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$25,000 to 34,999	9.2%	9.9%	9.8%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$15,000 to 24,999	9.0%	9.9%	10.8%
	2008 Est. HH Income \$0 to 14,999	12.8%	13.3%	15.7%
	2008 Est. Average Household Income	\$ 71,384	\$ 86,352	\$ 88,725
	2008 Est. Median HH Income	\$ 52,606	\$ 65,501	\$ 68,928
2008 Est. Per Capita Income	\$ 39,172	\$ 44,251	\$ 41,543	
2008 Est. Number of Businesses	2,452	10,139	20,963	
2008 Est. Total Number of Employees	23,952	153,628	351,349	

Montrose & Westheimer Houston, Texas		1.00 mi radius	2.00 mi radius	3.00 mi radius
RACE	2008 Est. White Population	74.4%	66.7%	60.2%
	2008 Est. Black Population	7.3%	16.8%	22.5%
	2008 Est. Asian & Pacific Islander	4.2%	3.8%	3.5%
	2008 Est. American Indian & Alaska Native	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
	2008 Est. Other Races Population	13.6%	12.4%	13.4%
HISPANIC	2008 Est. Hispanic Population	9,325	24,413	54,992
	2008 Est. Hispanic Population Percent	34.6%	32.1%	34.4%
	2013 Proj. Hispanic Population Percent	39.4%	37.0%	39.3%
	2000 Hispanic Population Percent	23.8%	21.0%	23.2%
	2008 Est. Adult Population (25 Years or Older)	19,632	54,714	110,268
EDUCATION (Adults 25 or Older)	2008 Est. Elementary (0 to 8)	9.0%	10.4%	11.9%
	2008 Est. Some High School (9 to 11)	5.7%	7.6%	8.9%
	2008 Est. High School Graduate (12)	15.9%	16.6%	16.0%
	2008 Est. Some College (13 to 16)	17.1%	15.4%	15.0%
	2008 Est. Associate Degree Only	5.4%	4.5%	3.9%
	2008 Est. Bachelor Degree Only	27.9%	26.1%	22.9%
	2008 Est. Graduate Degree	19.0%	19.5%	18.4%
HOUSING	2008 Est. Total Housing Units	17,144	45,002	81,809
	2008 Est. Owner Occupied Percent	25.3%	26.0%	30.5%
	2008 Est. Renter Occupied Percent	57.7%	54.8%	51.2%
	2008 Est. Vacant Housing Percent	17.0%	19.2%	18.3%
HOUSES BUILT BY YEAR	2000 Homes Built 1999 to 2000	7.3%	6.7%	5.9%
	2000 Homes Built 1995 to 1998	8.5%	8.6%	7.7%
	2000 Homes Built 1990 to 1994	1.4%	2.8%	3.3%
	2000 Homes Built 1980 to 1989	5.5%	7.6%	8.2%
	2000 Homes Built 1970 to 1979	12.1%	11.1%	10.7%
	2000 Homes Built 1960 to 1969	17.7%	17.0%	15.2%
	2000 Homes Built 1950 to 1959	12.2%	12.3%	13.3%
2000 Homes Built Before 1949	35.4%	34.0%	35.8%	
HOME VALUES	2000 Home Value \$1,000,000 or More	0.7%	4.8%	4.3%
	2000 Home Value \$500,000 to \$999,999	1.7%	12.2%	11.1%
	2000 Home Value \$400,000 to \$499,999	6.0%	7.4%	6.9%
	2000 Home Value \$300,000 to \$399,999	15.3%	12.6%	12.2%
	2000 Home Value \$200,000 to \$299,999	34.9%	23.8%	19.7%
	2000 Home Value \$150,000 to \$199,999	25.0%	14.4%	12.4%
	2000 Home Value \$100,000 to \$149,999	15.4%	11.7%	11.9%
	2000 Home Value \$50,000 to \$99,999	6.3%	8.7%	13.0%
	2000 Home Value \$25,000 to \$49,999	2.0%	4.0%	7.0%
	2000 Home Value \$0 to \$24,999	0.5%	0.6%	1.5%
2000 Median Home Value	\$ 225,698	\$ 313,633	\$ 285,130	
2000 Median Rent	\$ 561	\$ 574	\$ 549	

Montrose & Westheimer Houston, Texas		1.00 mi radius	2.00 mi radius	3.00 mi radius
LABOR FORCE	2008 Est. Labor: Population Age 16+	23,151	64,304	132,199
	2008 Est. Civilian Employed	75.7%	68.8%	61.7%
	2008 Est. Civilian Unemployed	4.8%	5.2%	5.9%
	2008 Est. in Armed Forces	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	2008 Est. not in Labor Force	19.5%	26.0%	32.3%
	2008 Labor Force: Males	57.4%	55.2%	54.8%
2008 Labor Force: Females	42.6%	44.8%	45.2%	
OCCUPATION	2000 Occupation: Population Age 16+	17,122	40,646	70,177
	2000 Mgmt., Business, & Financial Operations	20.1%	21.6%	20.6%
	2000 Professional and Related	33.8%	33.1%	32.3%
	2000 Service	12.7%	12.2%	12.3%
	2000 Sales and Office	22.6%	22.3%	22.0%
	2000 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
	2000 Construction, Extraction, & Maintenance	4.6%	4.9%	6.0%
	2000 Production, Transport, & Material Moving	6.0%	5.8%	6.7%
	2000 Percent White Collar Workers	75.8%	77.0%	74.9%
	2000 Percent Blue Collar Workers	23.9%	23.0%	25.1%
TRANSPORTATION TO WORK	2000 Drive to Work Alone	71.5%	71.6%	70.8%
	2000 Drive to Work in Carpool	7.6%	7.9%	8.8%
	2000 Travel to Work by Public Transportation	9.6%	8.6%	8.5%
	2000 Drive to Work on Motorcycle	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
	2000 Walk or Bicycle to Work	6.5%	6.6%	6.5%
	2000 Other Means	0.6%	0.8%	0.9%
2000 Work at Home	4.2%	4.3%	4.4%	
TRAVEL TIME	2000 Travel to Work in 14 Minutes or Less	36.1%	39.2%	36.9%
	2000 Travel to Work in 15 to 29 Minutes	38.6%	39.4%	40.1%
	2000 Travel to Work in 30 to 59 Minutes	19.7%	17.8%	16.8%
	2000 Travel to Work in 60 Minutes or More	3.6%	3.6%	4.1%
	2000 Average Travel Time to Work	18.7	18.5	19.2
	CONSUMER EXPENDITURE	2008 Est. Total Household Expenditure (in Millions)	\$ 792.1	\$ 2,284.6
2008 Est. Apparel		\$ 36.2	\$ 110.9	\$ 207.3
2008 Est. Contributions & Gifts		\$ 53.7	\$ 164.0	\$ 309.0
2008 Est. Education & Reading		\$ 23.6	\$ 71.4	\$ 134.7
2008 Est. Entertainment		\$ 44.0	\$ 127.8	\$ 238.8
2008 Est. Food, Beverages & Tobacco		\$ 125.2	\$ 354.8	\$ 659.1
2008 Est. Furnishings And Equipment		\$ 34.7	\$ 101.7	\$ 190.0
2008 Est. Health Care & Insurance		\$ 56.1	\$ 159.4	\$ 295.9
2008 Est. Household Operations & Shelter & Utilities		\$ 237.9	\$ 687.4	\$ 1,262.2
2008 Est. Miscellaneous Expenses		\$ 13.3	\$ 37.6	\$ 69.5
2008 Est. Personal Care		\$ 11.5	\$ 32.9	\$ 61.3
2008 Est. Transportation	\$ 153.9	\$ 436.6	\$ 809.6	



Satellite Image of Study Area

no scale



The Crossroads – History vs Reality

The epicenter of Montrose is the intersection of Westheimer Road and Montrose Boulevard, viewed by many as one of the great corners of the city. These two major thoroughfares carry more traffic than the original planners could ever have envisioned. Two of Houston’s major employment bases, downtown to the northeast and the Texas Medical Center to the south, pump significant amounts of traffic through the intersection on weekdays, especially at rush hour. The recent significant growth on Washington Avenue and the medical professionals utilize the Montrose/Studemont traffic corridor to access the Medical Center exacerbate the capacity issues of the crossroads corner.

The rush hour traffic and the lack of a median make the intersection threatening to pedestrians. Re-engineering of the lanes, narrowing the roads or some other solution is needed to slow the traffic and improve pedestrian safety. A means of diverting some of the north/south traffic off of Montrose Boulevard on to Waugh Drive and Commonwealth is recommended. Reducing and controlling through traffic in order to emphasize more local access should be a priority. Transforming the intersection into a meaningful community-serving destination as well as a vibrant transit corridor is essential.

The intersection, as the belt-buckle of the area, needs an upgrade that can set the tone for the vision of Montrose of the future. Creating some sort of a landmark, possibly involving public art, could be part of the solution.

Some in the community have suggested a traffic circle at the Montrose/Westheimer intersection. The traffic circle would punctuate the intersection with an interesting counterbalance to the beautiful Mecom Fountain traffic circle at the confluence of Main Street and Montrose Boulevard to the south. However, the intersection may lack enough land for a traffic circle and it might not promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. A roundabout was also suggested as an even better alternative as it is capable of processing more cars per hour than a standard intersection and

reduces the rate of accidents as well.

Located at the southwest quadrant of the intersection lies one of the neighborhood’s largest contiguous tracts – nearly three acres covered by an older, underutilized retail strip center, quick-service restaurant and a large amount of surface parking. In the past, this corner was one of the key locations for the Westheimer Art Festival which has subsequently relocated to Memorial Park northwest of Montrose. The panelists agree that the parcel is rapidly approaching the end of its useful life in its current form and therefore has vitally significant redevelopment potential.



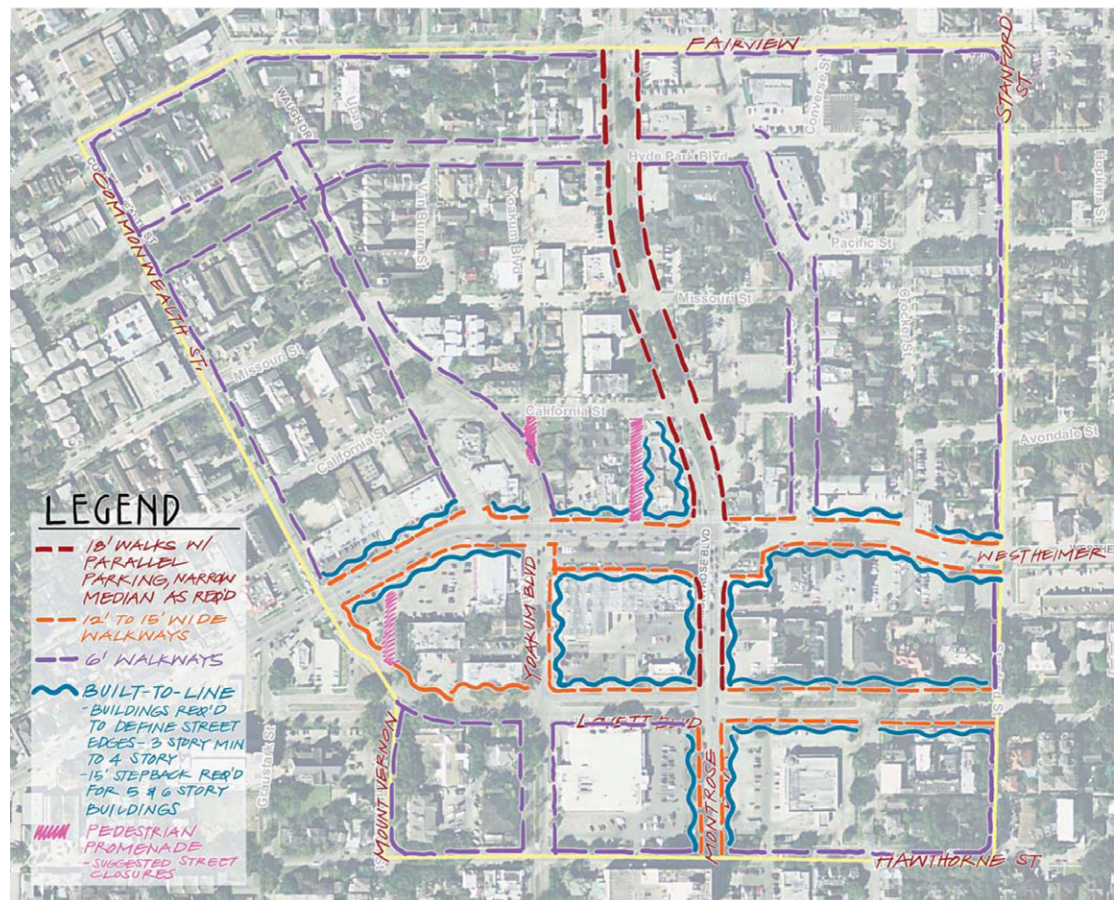
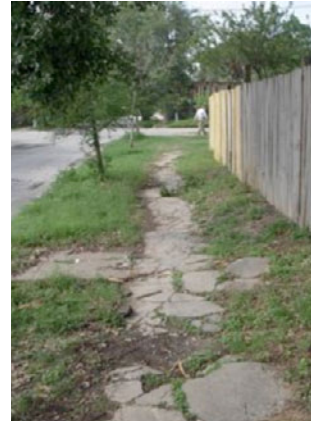
Opportunities

A Place for Pedestrians

One of the most needed improvements to the intersection and surrounding area are enhanced walkability, improved pedestrian safety and comfort. Wider sidewalks and better pedestrian protection that shields walkers from passing cars are vital. The sidewalk network throughout the entire community has gaps and deficiencies that need to be improved to make the neighborhood more walkable.

The panel agrees that a roadway improvement plan similar to the one under construction in the Upper Kirby district to the west would substantially improve pedestrian safety and celebrate

the retail experience in the study area. Near this primary intersection, broad sidewalks, at least six feet wide, are sorely needed and even wider walkways may be needed in places of heavy foot traffic. At the least, the city should enforce the Neighborhoods-to-Standard program for this neighborhood.



Montrose 24/7

The 24/7 heartbeat of Montrose is unmatched in the state of Texas. Activity and commerce continue through the weekends and throughout the night. For example, the Katz's Deli on Westheimer is often packed to capacity with customers at 4 a.m.

The blend of restaurants, clubs and retail draws customers to Montrose around-the-clock and the residents' desire to walk keeps street life vibrant.

Business opportunities are abundant and could thrive in an improved traffic and pedestrian intersection with surrounding streetscape improvements that capitalize on the 24/7 environment. Mixed-use projects with entertainment components could also fit nicely into the Montrose mix.



The Montrose culture is known for its diversity. The gay and lesbian community holds historical pride in the area, which is the location for a large concentration of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) community's entertainment venues, entrepreneurial ventures, churches and social outreach organizations. Montrose is home to many college students, urban professionals, artists and the "Creative Class". A Market Assessment reveals a population that is an eclectic blend of young, cosmopolitan urbanites, empty nesters recently relocated from the suburbs and a growing number of families with young children, as well as senior citizens and economically challenged immigrant Latinos.

Street crime is reportedly not as severe as the reputation that has developed recently, suggesting that impacting perception is extremely important. Undercover officers already deter the spread of sidewalk drug dealing and street prostitution. However, the Houston Police Department's storefront station on Westheimer is no longer manned around-the-clock, a suggestion

that would keep it in-step with the 24/7 nature of Montrose and provide quick response to criminal activity when it does occur. It has been suggested that mounted patrols would be desirable as a visible reminder of the area's safe environment.

Parking

The dense nature of Montrose and its fragmented ownership of property create a severe shortage of parking and lead the Panel to encourage a more urban redevelopment and mass transit in the area. Patrons of restaurants or clubs often turn to residential streets for overflow parking to the dismay of homeowners.

In order to provide parking for customers, as required by city code, restaurant owners often acquire nearby residences and demolish them to create surface parking lots. The demolition of Montrose's older homes frays the character and integrity of the neighborhoods. The Panel considers a parking plan for the area to be of critical concern.



To address the lack of available parking, some communities have implemented "parking banks" that can be strategically located to alleviate the shortages and free up the street frontage for pedestrians and retailers. The multi-story structures, built in a sustainable fashion with a pleasing design, should be erected in several locations in the neighborhood, both north and south of Westheimer and east and west of Montrose Boulevard.

These parking banks will allow restaurants and retailers to satisfy city codes and customers' needs without the continued demolition of the existing and sometimes historic housing stock. Dialogue with the City of Houston and the Management District to accept these "solutions" as code-compliant parking should begin now. Funding for the garage development can be arranged through developer contribution and perhaps thru parking revenues, and through the area's expanded management district or a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ).

Parks, Plazas and Promenades

The Montrose area has a shortage of public space, parks and plazas. Of the 30-plus neighbors and stakeholders interviewed by the Panel, a majority cited the need for community gathering places and the fact that, to many, Montrose IS its people and their diverse culture. Linear promenades should be created and the intersection of Westheimer and Lovett Boulevard appears to be particularly well-suited for a signature promenade that might extend in four directions to expand the public space available for residents and visitors. (see diagram A)

The primary intersection of Montrose and Westheimer is currently devoid of substantial safe and inviting pedestrian space. A plaza at this intersection is vital for beautification and rebirth of this neighborhood. The northwest corner of the intersection appears to be an excellent candidate for site selection by park planners. (see diagram B)

Several excellent pocket parks or plaza sites can be identified within a five-minute walk of the Westheimer/ Montrose intersection.

The southwest corner of the Westheimer/Montrose intersection is ideal for a plaza, a community gathering spot with a visitor's center that could promote area restaurants, merchants and events.

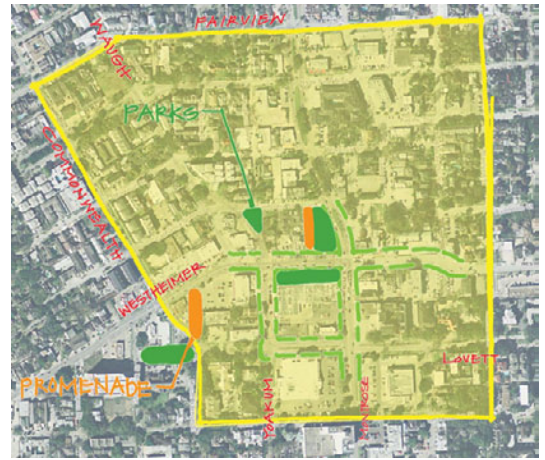


Diagram A

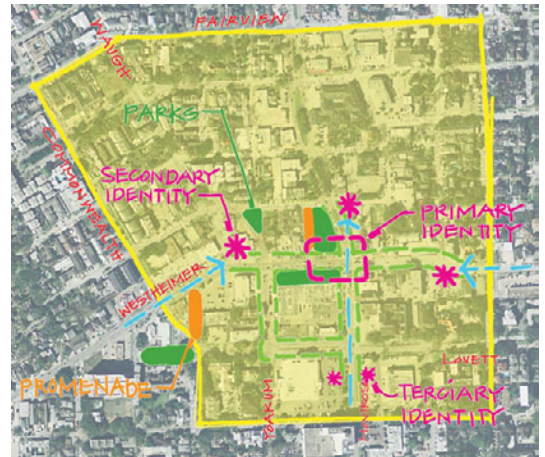


Diagram B

Planning and Design

Identity: Putting a Name with a Place

The Montrose area needs to establish a symbolic sense of arrival to visitors and a hometown feeling of welcome to residents and visitors alike.

With its large collection of smaller neighborhoods and a fragmented inventory of retailers and restaurants, there is a wide array of opinion among Houstonians about where Montrose begins and where it ends. This is not a call for delineation of official boundaries, but more a need for recognition of Montrose as a special place.

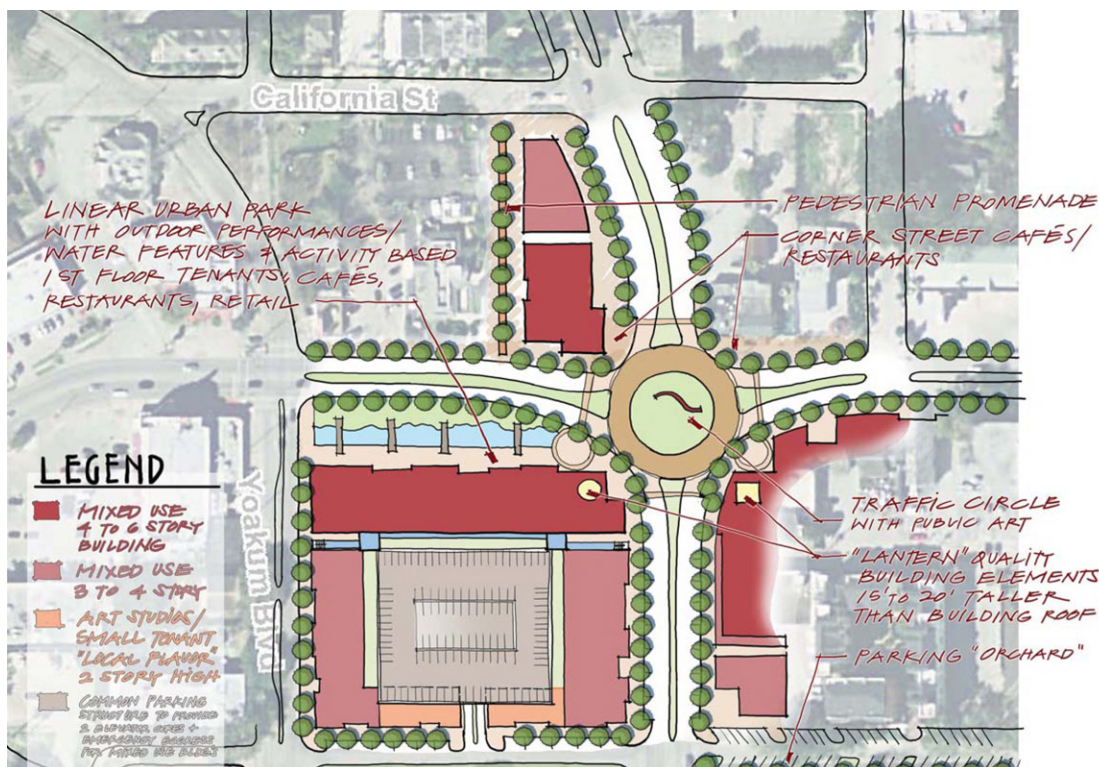
Montrose needs identity gateways and a wayfinding system. This can be in the form of signage, artistic installations or archways. Perhaps a creation of a logo for the Montrose is required.

This branding of a place, the articulation of an identity, is a critical step in moving forward with establishment of a sense of place. And this should be an early task the management district should take on.

Other districts like Uptown and Upper Kirby have led the way in this regard.

This should enhance the marketing capability of the merchants and restaurants of Montrose and promotion of quality neighborhoods and new and redeveloped neighborhoods.

Identity marker sites, landmarks of Montrose as a place, should be identified on Westheimer Road and Montrose Boulevard. Some efforts in this regard were attempted earlier in this decade, but they seem understated for this district identity.



Desirable Development

Montrose's unique character, with its 24/7 environment and its massing of the Creative Class, paves the way for development opportunities that do not exist in the suburbs. Increasing density above what is currently in place is desirable; however, it was often stressed in our interviews that density levels similar to the newly built, mixed-use development at Kirby and Westheimer -- West Avenue -- would perhaps be too dense to maintain the area's distinctive ambience. Though it is clear that the improvements envisioned cannot happen without greatly improved public-sector support, over-programming the area's redevelopment would be considered a mistake by many.

Restaurants, especially locally-owned, chef-driven eateries, have been key drivers of Montrose's recent success and are already a strong part of the area's identity. The area has long been an attraction for people from across the city that are looking for a unique dining experience. Capitalizing on the success of one-of-a-kind destination restaurants is logical. Chain restaurants have a presence in Montrose, but are mainly limited to a few quick-service outlets. National chains do not appear to be an ideal fit with the unique Montrose fabric and stakeholders interviewed by the panel often underscored the need to apply more on applications of urban standards, rather than suburban, retail standards to the Neartown Crossroads area.

Montrose's successful retailers, like restaurants, have tended to be boutiques and locally owned shop operators. Apparel stores that appeal to young people have recently established an impressive presence on Westheimer, on the western edge of the Montrose area. National chains do not have much traction.

Office space is limited to smaller users, with typical leases of 5,000 square feet or less. Rental rates are strong, but the leasing velocity is modest. A new 100,000-square-foot office building would represent a two- or three-year supply of space at the current leasing pace. Based on the consensus of local developer-tenants attracted to the area include smaller law and consulting firms, architects, entrepreneurial professionals, social services groups, medical-related and other small businesses. The area is reportedly grossly underbanked. Major new office towers are not considered to be a good fit for Montrose, but smaller unique office buildings, or office space in mixed-use projects, might be excellent additions.

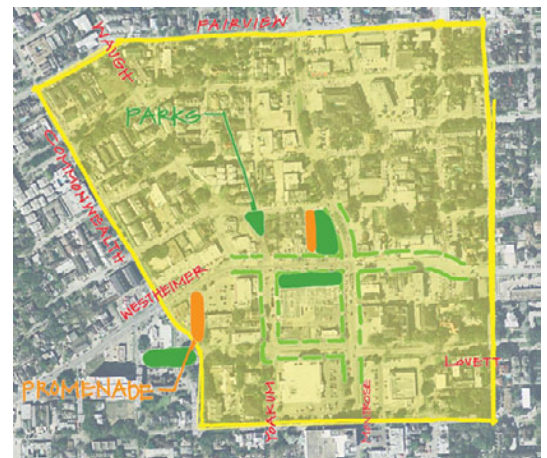
Smaller-scale residential projects and mid-rise condominium towers, for example, would also appear to be a desirable fit for Montrose. As the pedestrian-friendly nature of the area improves, the thoughtful addition of medium-density residential units, for-sale and rental properties, could be excellent additions to the neighborhood. Housing cost is also an important issue for the area as older residences continue to be demolished for the construction of higher density townhomes and mid-rise condo buildings.

Demand for hotels in Montrose may exist, but the developers should proceed with care. Currently La Colombe d'Or, located three blocks south of the Crossroads, is the closest small hotel. An affordable limited-service chain property probably would not be well received by the neighborhood. However, an additional boutique hotel with a unique flavor, perhaps even located on Westheimer, would likely be considered desirable.

Montrose would also seem to be an excellent location for a community theater, a natural extension of the Montrose art community. This concept could be paired with art galleries that nurture the visual arts spawned by the Montrose community. The old Tower Theater, a former movie-house on Westheimer, has the historic theater connection, but it is currently used as a video rental outlet. Perhaps it could be reconstituted into a small theater format.

The Greening of Montrose

Montrose has a mature tree canopy. All expansions and improvements should display a careful respect for the established urban forest.



Pedestrian Infrastructure

It is critical to create infrastructure that not only provides a unified appearance but is designed to facilitate the needs of a pedestrian-oriented community. This will require adopting design guidelines, similar to those illustrated below, that create a separation of vehicles and pedestrians, wide sidewalks, underground utilities, green space, a shaded tree canopy and street lighting. The concept sketches for the target area illustrates several different levels of design depending on the desired or needed requirements.

Sustainable Neighborhood

The implementation of sustainable development and improvement is encouraged on every level as Montrose matures. This is in keeping with the community environmental ethic and is important

for our region on every level. Energy efficiency should be implemented wherever possible and green building practices must be stressed. Projects and programs that fail to exhibit sustainable values will not be well-received in the community.

Keeping new development on a scale appropriate to the historic and residential nature of much of Montrose should be an integral part of this effort. Saving historic buildings, avoiding strategies that require the destruction of housing stock to meet City of Houston parking requirements, consolidation of smaller properties for massive developments and retention of the local Montrose character are key. The area's history and its eclecticism are both valued highly by the community.

The ideals of programs promoted by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), which decrease automobile usage and expand sustainability will preserve energy and improve air quality.



Renderings courtesy Insite Architecture and Asakura Robinson

Implementation Tools

The Panel understands and reflects similar desires for the neighborhood surrounding the intersection of Westheimer and Montrose that have been included in previous studies. An obstacle cited by stakeholders and the Panel was that the Montrose area was not fully represented by a single management district. This severely impacts the ability to obtain funding and gain consensus between community groups on area improvements. In June, 2009, a redistricting that creates a West Montrose District and paves the way for its consolidation with the East Montrose District into a new combined single Montrose District.

The Panel believes that the best way to find early consensus is by moving forward with the goals and plans already adopted by the neighborhood in existing plans, and looking to complete an additional HGAC funded study. The plans already adopted and recommended include:

1. The Montrose Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

Published in November 2005 by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), the plan identified Montrose, located close to major employment centers in downtown and the Texas Medical Center and several universities, as an ideal cornerstone for the growth of pedestrian circulation and urban bicycling. The plan should be re-examined under the template of today's construction costs. After costs have been determined, these projects should be phased and planned for implementation, as some of these improvements could occur in the City right of way and could be eligible for expedited funding from the new Management District.

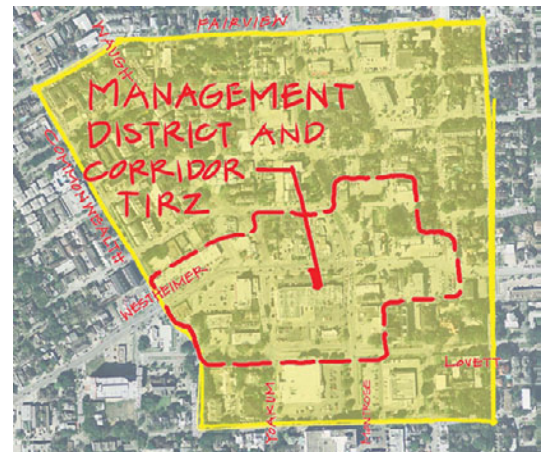
2. The Montrose Boulevard Conservancy Plan

This plan outlines improvements and steps for enhancements that should be implemented. The Technical Assistance Panel supports this plan. The new Management District can now move components of this plan forward. Elements of the plan that address improved street infrastructure

will be eligible for increased funding and will provide an opportunity to create safe, walkable neighborhoods. Small neighborhood parks and open spaces as identified in this plan could become a focus for public funding as these public amenities were cited by stakeholders as having significant value.

3. H-GAC Livable Centers Program

Montrose appears to be an excellent candidate for the Livable Centers Program, promoted and funded through the H-GAC. Livable Centers are part of H-GAC's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and the Panel believes that the study area and the surrounding neighborhood would be well served by this program. The Livable Centers program includes a well-planned array of transportation modalities, retail, office and residential uses. The study can take into account regional transportation improvements with potential redevelopment activities in surrounding areas. The multi-modal transportation aspect of a Livable Center at the Montrose Westheimer Crossroads would integrate public transit stops with connections for autos, bicycles and pedestrians. The mixed-use nodes of activity encourage density that is convenient to the pedestrian and decreases reliance on the automobile. The Management District should apply for such a study as soon as possible to interface with H-GAC regarding implementation of the program in Montrose.



Coordinated planning is essential to ensuring that appropriate development occurs in appropriate places. The Management District's insight and perspective would be well suited during the completion of the study.

Public Financing Tools

The creation of the HCID #11 and the existing HCID #6 soon to be combined Management District should allow for comprehensive planning and near-term community improvements to occur. In addition to these public funding mechanisms, forming a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) can also be a powerful public financing tool. The Panel cited the potential for a corridor TIRZ, encompassing only the commercial areas starting at the intersections of Westheimer and Montrose and spanning several blocks in each direction. The benefit of a TIRZ versus a Public Improvement District (PID) is that there is no special assessment that is levied for the public improvements. The improvements are funded based on future tax revenues created in the district through redevelopment and increased property values. A significant catalyst for redevelopment was identified as the three-acre strip center. In addition to this site there are several smaller areas for potential infill redevelopment. The TIRZ would enable improvements in the area that would have not occurred, but for the existence of the TIRZ. If forming a TIRZ is not possible, property owners along the Westheimer Montrose axis could elect to form a Public Improvement District (PID) whereby a special assessment is levied and directed towards the cost of defined capital improvements in the area.

A similar authority could be formed for the construction of a parking garage (serving as a parking bank) in the area to service restaurants and retailers. The availability of parking will allow modest increases in density at suitable locations, increasing tax revenues in the district, and enabling further public improvements including parks, streetscapes, landscaping, sidewalks, and transportation improvements. Addressing the parking should be a significant benefit to adjacent residential communities and will allow the conservation of historic homes and allow density to increase along the commercial corridors. PIDs can also be used to fund an increased police presence and crime reduction efforts in the area. This will assist to reduce the perception of crime and promote a safe retail and pedestrian environment. Again, based on the historic separation

of the districts over such a prolonged period, it is essential that the Management District consolidate interests, educate property owners about what is possible for public funding and identify proactive ways to make visible near term improvements. The Panel believes Neartown's greatest opportunity lies in the illustration of City and Management District commitment to the area through improved infrastructure and pedestrian realms in City right of way.

An additional funding mechanism that would be in line with the MBC Conservancy Plan to be communicated and promoted by the neighborhood is a Façade Improvement Program. This type of program could utilize funds from the Management District, City, or established PID to offer grants or interest-free loans to property owners to encourage façade improvements to buildings. The Management District could assist in developing Design Guidelines that encourage the appropriate revitalization of as many structures as possible in the zone. For the Montrose, this could include creative artistic expression on the exterior of buildings, creative paint and



color combinations, and lighting improvements. For example, properties that face Westheimer and Montrose could be eligible, as these properties largely characterize the area from a visitor's perspective.

Based on a review of public and private landowners within the project area, it is evident that a majority of property is privately owned, and parcels are generally small and irregular shaped, not conducive to cohesive redevelopment. With the exception of the nearly three-acre strip center, catalytic redevelopment of any significant scale is unlikely. Due to the lack of publicly owned land in the area, the panel recommends that the Neartown Association continue to hold meaningful discussions with the strip center ownership. The strip center property is critical for the entire area and its redevelopment will have significant, long term impact for the Montrose. Because of this, proper communication regarding scale, density, uses and product mix should be discussed as the ownership considers redevelopment. Incentives to maintain communication with the ownership group can be through potential access to public funding, community support, and the prior completed planning (Bicycle Plan, MBC Conservancy Plan and Livable Centers Program). The Livable Centers Program has the opportunity to objectively analyze the financial feasibility and plan-

ning of the larger area in a public forum setting. The completion of this plan can lead to further redevelopment interest because this is often the basis for private redevelopment plans.

Based on the state of the current economic environment, it is likely that legislative action will uncover funding opportunities that have not yet been identified. Local governments (city and county) are experiencing opportunities to access federal funding for redevelopment, diversification, affordable housing, green building systems and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects. The Montrose needs a champion in political office with the ability to promote the area and increase access to these new funding tools. Programs like Livable Centers can help lay the foundation for identifying projects that can utilize these funding sources, for instance an environmentally sensitive "green" garage. The Panel recommends that a main objective of the Neartown Association should be to interact with these public officials and entities to promote improvements to the area and assist the public bodies to understand the wide range of funding mechanisms available. This could include creating a Special Purpose Entity (SPE) to fund improvements, structuring creative Public/Private Partnerships with landowners and identifying the long range planning needs of the community.



Conclusion

The Montrose and Westheimer crossroads area suffers from several cycles of economic decline followed by rapid escalation of perceived property values and institutional investment. This has left a blighted core to a very important historical neighborhood.

The surrounding community can be the solution to encouraging desired redevelopment through legislative and broader city/county initiatives whose goals are often different but can achieve the residents' desired results. The neighborhood can build a safe 24-hour pedestrian infrastructure encouraging new development that maintains the residential scale of Montrose. The city and county can provide infrastructure to increase the area's tax base and residential makeup.

This opportunity can be a model for neighborhood redevelopment within the City of Houston and thus becomes an essential initiative in sustaining and regenerating the inner-city neighborhoods.

Private development can help achieve these goals thru incentives from the public realm and understanding of the community's desired environment. Design guidelines for infrastructure (streets, curbs, sidewalks, trees, lighting) must be implemented through public funding as an economic stimulus. The private developer will need assurance that the community is dedicated to this intersection thru investment of time and infrastructure, minimizing the uncertainty of adjacent property uses and value thus enhancing the opportunity for a successful mixed-use development becoming the new Montrose Crossroads.



About the Panel

Jim Kollaer, FAIA, LEED AP
Managing Director
Kollaer Advisors, LLC
Houston, Texas

Kollaer has worked to improve the quality of life in the Houston region for the last 35 years. He served in a variety of roles, including architect-urban planner, real estate executive, Chamber executive and business executive. During his years practicing architecture, he was involved in the planning and zoning of new towns and university campuses in the US, the Middle East and Africa.

For 15 years he has served as CEO/President of the Greater Houston Partnership, an organization formed by combining the Houston Chamber of Commerce, The Houston Economic Development Council, and the World Trade Association. In that role he was integrally involved in the major activities that laid the groundwork for the future economic development of the Houston Region including the light-rail plan, transportation planning for the next 25 years, the Quality of Life Coalition, The Center for Houston's Future, the Houston Wilderness, three sports venues and a number of national issues including "No Child Left Behind" and NAFTA.

Kollaer's experience includes a decade leading the operations of a major real estate firm in Houston and across the state. Most recently he was a partner in the Houston operations of the Staubach Corporate Services team (now JLL), a firm that provides tenant representation services to meet the needs of clients worldwide.

His current practice, Kollaer Advisors, provides confidential strategic advisory services to international corporate and real estate clients. He has also provided market and strategic economic services to firms and cities in Europe.

He has served on ULI Advisory Service Panels in Canada and in the Houston Region. He has spoken on issues of leadership, the economy, governance, non-profit governance and has led

strategic workshops of "C-level" executives and partners of international service firms.

Kollaer attended LSU and received his professional degree in Architecture from Texas Tech University. He is a member of the College of Fellows of the AIA, a senior fellow of the American Leadership Forum, was a fellow in the society of International Business Fellows and a forum graduate of the Center for Houston's Future. He is a licensed architect, real estate broker and a LEED AP.

Lance Gilliam, SCSM, SCLS
Houston, Texas

Lance is a managing director of and shareholder in Moody Rabin Interests. He is also a member of the company's executive committee.

With a primary focus on retail user transactions, including tenant representation and project development, Lance Gilliam has represented both national and local retailers throughout a broad market area, including Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Colorado.

Focused on long-term, full-service relationships with key retailers, Lance's clients have included Office Depot, Bally Total Fitness, Circuit City, Frost Bank, the J.C. Penney Co., PetsMart, Regal Entertainment, Sun & Ski Sports, The Sports Authority and Washington Mutual. His responsibilities on behalf of clients have ranged from their initial entry into major metropolitan markets to disposition of non-strategic, non-operating assets. Representative assignments include his advising and representing Office Depot in the disposition of non-strategic retail assets, relocation of stores and renewals of retail leases in a broad geographic area. Lance has also advised the J.C. Penney Co. in the disposition of non-operating department stores in the Houston metropolitan area.

With his partner Ed James, Lance has shared responsibility for the leasing and development consulting for a number of major retail projects in Houston, Texas. Successes and ongoing

project leasing responsibilities include one of the country's first lifestyle shopping centers, Town & Country Village, as well as Copperwood Village, The Shops at Bella Terra, The Shops at Riverstone and Silverlake Village --- all community shopping centers closely associated with master planned communities. Lance has guided the redevelopment and/or disposition of Town & Country Square, a former Incredible Universe and a former Garden Ridge Pottery.

Lance is an active member of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), having served both as a faculty member and as the Dean of the ICSC University's School of Open-Air Center Development. He has earned both the Senior Certified Shopping Center Manager (SCSM) and Senior Certified Leasing Specialist (SCLS) designations. He is also a member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and its Houston Advisory Services Committee.

In 1977, Gilliam earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Real Estate with Honors from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He also attended Southern Methodist's graduate program in Real Estate and Regional Science.

Gilliam's community involvement includes his current service on the board and executive committee of The Children's Museum of Houston and former service on the board of the Houston Area Urban League and vestry of St. Martin's Episcopal Church.

Will Reed Houston, Texas

Will Reed is President of Stainback Public/Private Real Estate (SPPRE), a Houston-based, national consulting company. Since SPPRE's inception in 2001, Mr. Reed has served as a Project Manager to structure and implement public/private finance and development plans for projects totaling \$6.15 billion. Mr. Reed is a Full Member of ULI and a member of ULI Houston Sustainable Community Design Institute. He is also a member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). Mr. Reed is a graduate of West Virginia University with a degree in Business & Economics.

Pamela Minich President, Minich Strategic Services Houston, Texas

Minich has been engaged in providing strategic marketing, market and economic research and consulting services to a broad spectrum of real estate and related organizations for more than 25 years and in nearly 25 states. Based in Houston, Texas, she currently operates Minich Strategic Services, a consulting practice engaged in providing market intelligence and strategic marketing services to the commercial real estate, homebuilding, non-profit and public sectors. She has special expertise in housing development of all types, including active adult, affordable, seniors, entry-level, resort, urban high-rise, etc.

Though Minich has spent most of her career as an independent consultant, she was employed by Centex Homes for 5 years, initiating and then presiding over the Houston division's strategic marketing function, injecting a consumer-centric, fact-based approach that contributed to a tripling of annual sales volume for the Division. She also directed numerous large scale housing market segmentation studies and analyzed the market feasibility of land acquisitions totaling roughly \$100m. She played a central role in designing both new active adult housing products as well as urban townhomes.

Minich routinely interfaces with land planners, architects, real estate attorneys, financial analysts, civil engineers, developers and homebuilders as she collaborates on a variety of projects from small, brownfield, infill sites to large, suburban, master-planned communities encompassing many thousands of acres. Her market research expertise includes all quantitative and qualitative methodologies. She is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and the American Marketing Association.

Benjamin Llana Houston, Texas

Llana is a director with McCord Development, Inc. managing certain real estate investment and development activities. McCord Development, Inc. is a diversified development, investment, asset management, leasing, and land management company specializing in office, industrial, single family and multi-family real estate. Before returning to Houston in 2007, he worked as an

architecture and engineering consultant in Paris and Madrid working on large-scale projects in Europe and the United States.

Llana holds a master's degree with distinction from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Architecture and Bachelor of Science in Engineering with honors from The University of Texas at Austin.

Ric Guenther Houston, Texas

Ric Guenther is a director of architecture and planning for the Houston office of LRK Architects. He manages the South Texas region of design work for the firm leveraging the expertise of the national practice of Looney Ricks and Kiss Architects based in Memphis Tennessee. Constantly looking beyond a single style or theory, LRK's team of 150 architects and staff working in nine offices is one of the largest and most respected full service architecture, planning, environmental and interior design firms in the United States. LRK listens to client expectations, recognizes the market, understands the user, and acknowledges a reverence for place. Projects are executed with passion. Architectural excellence is given. An enhanced quality of life is the end result.

Prior to taking this position he was a senior designer for 12 years with Kirksey Architects in Houston Texas responsible for the aesthetic goals of commercial, hospitality and institutional studio projects. Guenther holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Master Degree in Architecture from Rice University. He is a registered architect and LEED accredited professional.

Antonio Flamenco, AIA Houston, Texas

Antonio founded INsite Architecture in 2000. The company has since developed into a studio that focuses the knowledge and talent of the various team members on a multi-disciplinary practice that spans a variety of project types, including: large scale community planning and urban design with focus on area revitalization and environmental issues, hotels, country clubs, recreational and information center / community amenity buildings for first-home communities and resort facilities, office buildings, mixed-use projects that include retail, office, hotels and housing of various

types and single-family, one-of-a-kind type projects such as the 2005 HGTV DreamHome and the 2006 Southern Living Idea House.

Today Antonio is regarded a leader in bringing creative solutions to the various projects that the firm is commissioned with. Under his leadership, INsite has the ability to work on any type of projects, focusing the direction on solid principles that have achieved various design awards to completed project.

Also as a community leader and care for the environment, he dedicates time and energy for the improvement of the sustainable environment, having participated in community activities and urban studies for non-charitable organizations.



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